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## WESTERN HEMISPHERE

# South America: Possibility of Cooperation Against Leftist Exiles

**by Jim Buchanan, INR**
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Recent attacks on leftist exiles in Argentina raise questions about the security practices of the southern cone nations: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

- What degree of cooperation exists among southern cone security forces?
- Do these security forces actively participate or passively acquiesce in a program to execute political exiles who oppose any of the governments involved?

The fact that southern cone governments are all conservative military regimes and that none has an exemplary record of human rights invites speculation that there is an intergovernmental assassination plot. The evidence supporting such speculation is scanty, however, and it is equally possible that at least some of the exiles' problems are traceable to exclusively Argentine factors.

In recent months, Argentina has become a less attractive haven for leftist exiles than it was before the March 24 military coup that elevated General Videla to the presidency. After the Peronists resumed power in May 1973, opponents of the conservative military governments on Argentina's borders, and especially pro-Allende Chileans, swelled the refugee population in Argentina.

Since the coup, Argentina has been governed by conservative officers bent upon eradicating the subversive threat, and exiles have been victimized by a tri-cornered battle among security personnel, leftists, and right-wing assassins. In the most publicized incidents:

- On May 21, Zelmar Michelini and Luis Hector Gutierrez Ruiz, ex-legislators from Uruguay, were found murdered.
- On June 4, the body of Bolivian ex-president Juan Jose Torres was discovered.
- On June 11, 24 Chilean and Uruguayan refugees were kidnaped en masse and later released after interrogations accompanied by beatings and threats. On July 12, three more refugees received similar treatment, and 30 Uruguayan refugees have reportedly been missing since July 13.

3.3(b)(1) Near panic swept the exile community in the wake of these incidents, stated that no refugee now considers Argentina a safe place of residence.

The fact that these events are occurring in Argentina and not elsewhere in the southern cone supports the contention that they are uniquely Argentine in origin rather than part of an elaborate international conspiracy. Given the tense and volatile security environment that has existed since the coup, exiles can become victims for a number of reasons:

- They may have been involved in one of Argentina's terrorist groups.
- They may have been associated in the past with foreign and/or Argentine leftist groups, which is sufficient cause for death in the eyes of fanatical Argentine right-wingers.
- They may be victims of efforts by rightist extremists to frighten leftist exiles into fleeing Argentina.
- They may have run afoul of attempts by so-called hard-liners to intensify the anti-subversive campaign, which they believe the Videla government is not pursuing vigorously enough. For those who hold this view, the assassination of exiles would serve a dual purpose—eliminating alleged security threats and undermining the Videla government by exposing it to pressure on the human rights issue.

Official Argentine security personnel are clearly involved in the anti-exile activities, although it is impossible to assess in what numbers or at what level of command. An operation like the mass kidnaping of refugees could not have been executed without police and/or military connivance. Videla does not condone or encourage these actions, but neither does he appear capable of halting them.

Security forces in southern cone countries undoubtedly coordinate their counterterrorist efforts insofar as information exchanges are concerned, and Argentina and Brazil may provide limited training and advisory service to their smaller neighbors.

Over two years ago, security officials from all the southern cone countries except Brazil met in Buenos Aires and reportedly formalized arrangements to facilitate information exchanges and the movement of security officials on government business.

Cooperation of this nature makes sense:

- All the southern cone governments consider themselves targets of international leftist subversion.
- Irrefutable evidence shows that terrorists move back and forth across southern cone borders.
- Terrorists based in Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina are formally, if somewhat ineffectually, organized in the Revolutionary Coordinating Junta. The Coordinating Junta is primarily a creature of terrorists in Argentina and, according to available information, it has not sponsored any major southern cone operations. Junta representatives in Western Europe provide assistance to terrorists temporarily residing there and publish propaganda against southern cone governments.

cooperation among southern cone governments to combat subversion has intensified in recent months.

In early June, representatives of the intelligence services of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay met again, in Santiago, with Brazilian observers present, to further organize long-range cooperation among the participating countries. The following decisions were made:

- An intergovernmental computerized data bank of information on known and suspected subversives will be established in Santiago.
- Brazil will become a full-fledged member of the group.
- Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay will cooperate covertly against the activities of the Revolutionary Coordinating Junta in Paris.

Evidence that cooperation among the security forces extends beyond legal, institutionalized methods to some sort of "Murder, Inc." is inconclusive.

- The 24 exiles kidnaped on June 11 insist that they recognized Chilean and Uruguayan nationals among their interrogators.
- Edgardo Enriquez, a high-level Chilean terrorist who reportedly was captured in Argentina in late March or early April, may have been turned over to and subsequently killed by Chileans.
- a Brazil-Argentina agreement under which the two countries hunt and eliminate terrorists attempting to flee Argentina for Brazil. Brazilian and Argentine military units reportedly have operated jointly and inside each other's borders when necessary. 3.3(b)(1) 3.3(b)(1)
- Several reports indicate fairly extensive personnel exchanges between intelligence services in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile.
- Despite Argentine denials, published charges persist to the effect that Argentine authorities are forcibly repatriating political exiles.

On balance, the evidence confirms the existence of extensive cooperation among southern cone intelligence and security forces that has intensified over recent months, and suggests illicit cooperation against terrorist targets in some instances.

The facts do not conclusively establish the existence of formal, high-level cooperation for the express purpose of eliminating exiles. Nonetheless, given the common threat perception shared by the area's military governments, the possibility that a wider conspiracy exists cannot be dismissed. 3.5(c)

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